

# apb FORUM

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## MAJOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE - PALM BEACH COUNTY

Natural topographic features and existing public land holdings create an impressive pattern of major public open space within and adjacent Palm Beach County. Elements of this open space pattern within the county include the Atlantic Ocean and its beaches, Lake Worth and the Intracoastal Waterway, the fresh water lakes along the westerly slope of the coastal ridge, the portion of the Loxahatchee Slough within the West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area, the Flood Control District Conservation Areas, the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area, and Lake Okeechobee.

A number of major public open spaces also exist just outside the boundaries of Palm Beach County. Conservation Area 3 begins at the south boundary of the county and extends to the south. Only the northerly portion of Conservation Area 2 lies in Palm Beach County, the remainder is located in Broward County. About two-thirds of Lake Okeechobee is outside the county and most of the Big Cypress Indian Reservation lies south and west of the county. Jonathan Dickinson State Park is located just north of the county. A seven mile long strip of land immediately east of the state park between U.S. 1 and Jupiter Sound has been privately acquired and dedicated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a natural ecology sanctuary. In addition, a 4,400 foot strip of ocean beach just north of Palm Beach County, encompassing the Blowing Rocks beach area, has also been acquired by private interests and dedicated to the Nature Conservancy.

### THE ATLANTIC OCEAN AND ITS BEACHES

The eastern boundary of Palm Beach County extends north and south along the shores of the Atlantic Ocean for a distance of approximately 45 miles. Since the waters of the ocean and the ocean bottoms are public, use of them is assured, provided access is available. When land adjacent to the sea is privately owned, the seaward boundary of the private property is the mean high tide line. Thus, when the ocean tide is lower in elevation than its mean high level, there is an exposed strip of sandy beach along the water's edge which is public property. From the practical standpoint, however, meaningful public

beach usage is limited to those beach areas where general public access to the beach has been provided, along with automobile parking facilities and such additional services and facilities as are necessary to make public recreational use of the beach safe and pleasant. Lifeguards, refreshment stands, restroom facilities, showers, drinking fountains, benches, and shaded picnic tables are typical services and facilities which are provided at most of the public beaches in the county.



An important factor affecting public beach needs of Palm Beach County is that, unlike the central state area, there is no large interior of the state population and thus there is no significant weekend and holiday beach visitation by persons who are not residing or vacationing in Palm Beach County. Palm Beach County beaches need only serve local residents and seasonal and vacationing visitors.

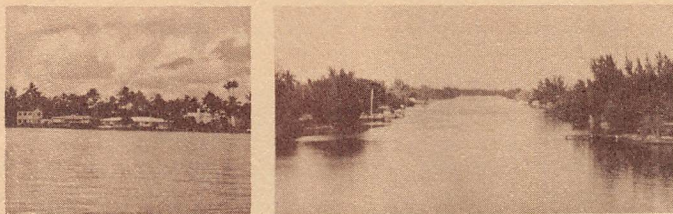
Publicly owned beachfront lands which are developed for general public beach access and use total 3.6 miles in length, an aggregate of 149 acres. In addition, 1.2 miles of publicly owned beachfront land is not improved for recreational purposes. Approximately four miles of privately owned, undeveloped beachfront land receives significant informal use by the general public.

PALM BEACH COUNTY LIBRARY

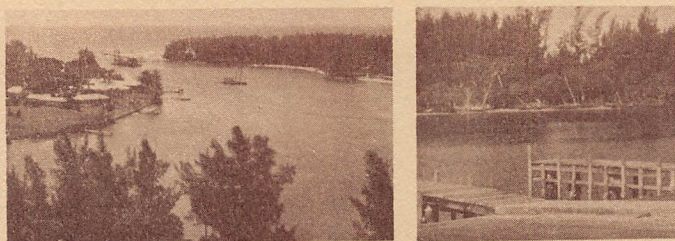


## INLAND MARINE WATERS AND THEIR SHORELINES

Navigable tidal waters in the State of Florida are public. Recreational use of the county's inland marine waters by the general public is therefore assured, subject to such use regulations as may be applicable. As is the case along the oceanfront, the division between public waters and private upland occurs at the line of mean high water, which is the water's edge when the tide is at mean high stage.



Public use and enjoyment of the Loxahatchee and Jupiter Rivers, the inlets, Lake Worth and the Intracoastal Waterway is primarily dependent upon access to them and upon recreational lands and facilities along their shores. The adequacy of boat launching areas, boat dockage, fishing and boating services, bathing beaches, and waterfront recreation lands and facilities determine how much public recreation utility inland marine waters have. Fishermen and others frequent undeveloped sections of the inland water shores, and boaters make moderately heavy use of Munyon, Peanut, and Pine Tree Islands in Lake Worth. Picnicking, overnight camping, swimming, fishing, and related recreational activities occur on these islands, although no facilities or services are provided.



The county's inlets are popular and productive fishing areas. They have been informally accessible to the on-foot fisherman until recent years, but development in their vicinity has blocked off several former pedestrian accessways, or includes no automobile parking facilities, or both. They are becoming decreasingly accessible, and are playing a decreasing role as public recreation resources.

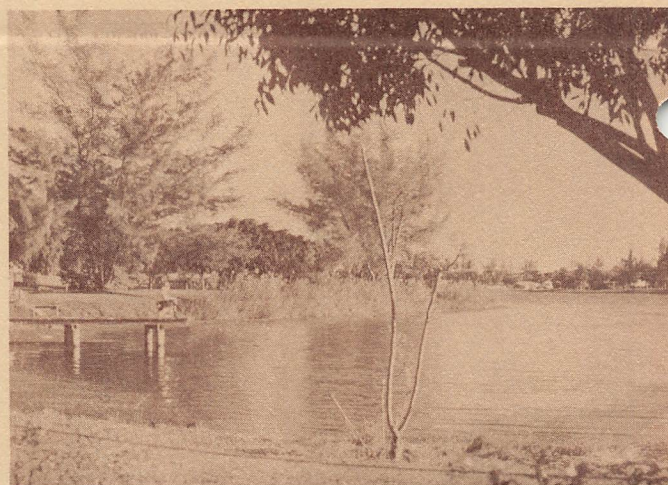
## COASTAL AREA FRESH WATER LAKES

Fresh water lakes in and near the county's urbanizing coastal strip which are sufficiently large to permit them to function as recreation resources include Lake Mangonia, Clear Lake, Lake Osborne, and Lake Ida. There are other fresh water bodies, small lakes, canals, and natural ponds, but none sufficiently large to warrant classification as a significant public recreation resource.

Both Lake Mangonia and Clear Lake function as water reservoirs for the City of West Palm Beach municipal water supply. The city holds a 100 foot easement strip around the lakes which it obtained for the purpose of protecting against shoreline activities detrimental to the lakes' water quality. Recreational activities are not permitted in Clear Lake, but are

permitted to a limited extent on Lake Mangonia. No major public recreation area has been developed on the lake, and recreational activities permitted exclude gasoline powered motor boats or other potential water polluting activities.

Lakes Ida and Osborne are each the site of a substantial lakefront park. John Prince Park, 666 acres in land area and including ten miles of Lake Osborne shoreline, is basically a family outing facility. It is located west of the City of Lake Worth, and is heavily used by persons who live in or near that city. It has been developed with picnic facilities and a variety of recreational equipment. At Lake Osborne, a boat launching area, restrooms, drinking fountains, golf driving range, nature trails, and an overnight camping area are provided. The park is pleasantly wooded and is sufficiently large to permit the various activity areas to be well spread out so as to avoid crowded conditions. Swimming has recently been prohibited because of water pollution.



Lake Ida Park, 337 acres in land area, contains 8,000 feet of lake frontage. It is not yet fully developed, and is less visually attractive than John Prince Park. As development continues, larger numbers of people will be accommodated, with greater enjoyment for all. Principal park facilities include boat ramp, picnic areas, and restrooms. The Delray Beach Theatre playhouse is located in the park. There is a wading area at the edge of Lake Ida, but swimming is prohibited because of water pollution.

## THE WEST PALM BEACH WATER CATCHMENT AREA

The portion of the Loxahatchee Slough which is embraced by the West Palm Beach water catchment area acts as a miniature conservation area. It stores surface water, recharges ground water, and there are facilities for shunting water into and out of it. A special act of the legislature relating to the catchment area provides that the City of West Palm Beach must retain full ownership and control of the area and that it be used primarily for water supply and such other public uses as are not inconsistent with its water supply function. Any modification of the provisions of the act must be approved through referendum by the electors of the City of West Palm Beach.

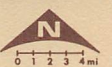
The catchment area was originally established for the purpose of providing a water supply source for the City of West Palm Beach. It continues to be a part of the West Palm Beach water





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**MAJOR EXISTING PUBLIC OPEN SPACES - LANDS AND WATERS**





supply and storage system, but it is now interconnected with the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District system, and thus is no longer the sole raw water supply source for the city. The City of West Palm Beach acquired the



catchment area when it purchased the city water supply, treatment and distribution system from the previous owner, a private water company. The area is now under the jurisdiction of the West Palm Beach Water and Sanitary Sewer Department. The 12,300 acre catchment area serves as habitat for a great many waterfowl and the deeper waters, primarily the canals, furnish bass and bream fishing.

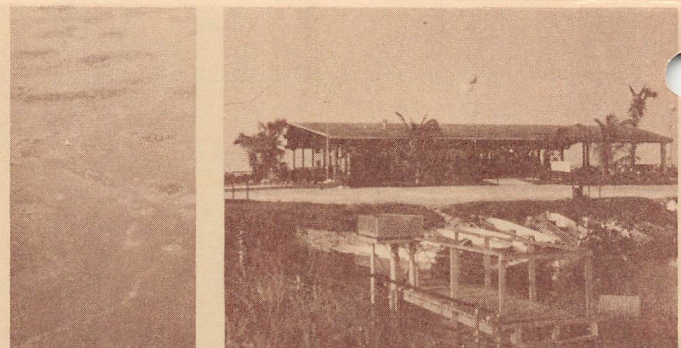
Although the catchment area has strikingly beautiful scenic qualities and is relatively close to the county's coastal urban strip, it is very lightly utilized for recreational purposes. Current recreational use of the area is limited primarily to local residents who are familiar with its intricacies. There is a single public point of access to the area at which a boat launching ramp and restroom facilities have been provided.

### THE CONSERVATION AREAS

Conservation Area 1, covering 143,085 acres, lies entirely within Palm Beach County. It was leased by the Flood Control District to the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, an agency of the U.S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, in 1951. The lease agreement transfers wildlife management and public recreation use management to the Bureau. The lease will expire in the year 2001, after which three successive fifteen-year renewal periods are provided for. The Bureau has acquired an additional 1,227 acres of land on the east side of the Conservation Area and 1,327 acres on the west side. These lands, along with Conservation Area 1, itself, have been designated the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge. At present, points of access to and recreational facilities at the refuge are minimal. Three public access points and recreation areas have been developed on the perimeter of the area. The Twenty Mile Bend site at the north end of the area affords boat launching facilities and picnic tables. The Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge headquarters on the eastern side of the area provides boat launching facilities and nature trails. The Loxahatchee Recreation Area, a full service concession, is located at the junction of the Refuge and Conservation Area 2 and provides access to both. It is the most extensively developed of the three recreation areas and provides visitor information, boat launching facilities, boat and motor rentals,

fishing guides, Everglades sightseeing rides, food, fishing and hunting equipment, and restrooms. In addition to the boat launching ramps at the three Conservation Area 1 access points, there is a launching ramp just south of the Palm Beach International Airport which affords access to the West Palm Beach Canal, and a ramp six miles east of Belle Glade giving boat access to the Hillsboro Canal.

The northern portion of Conservation Area 2 lies in the southern part of Palm Beach County. Most of Conservation Area 2 and all of Conservation Area 3 lies south of the county. Both Areas 2 and 3 have been leased to the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission for management of their fishing, hunting, and related recreational activities. That portion of Conservation Area 2 which lies within Palm Beach County is seldom covered with water. The only recreational access point to the Palm Beach County portion of Area 2 is the previously described Loxahatchee Recreation Area, located west of Boca



Raton. Fewer recreation use restrictions are imposed by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission on Conservation Areas 2 and 3 than by the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife on Conservation Area 1. Camping and permanent cabins are permitted in Areas 2 and 3. A substantial fraction of Area 1 has been set aside as undisturbed wildlife propagation area and is off limits to visitors, although this has little impact on the Refuge's recreational utility, since the off limits area is so densely vegetated it is practically inaccessible, and only a tiny fraction of the Refuge's visitors would ever penetrate it.

Because of their flatness and the lack of visual vantage points, it is very difficult to exhibit the conservation areas to the casual visitor. There is no problem for the fisherman, hunter, or other visitor who is equipped to get away from the access points and into the Glades themselves, but the typical tourist is often frustrated by his inability to drive to a conservation area recreation site, step from his automobile, and com-



prehend the vast wilderness of the Everglades. The Bureau plans substantial additions to Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge visitor accommodation facilities. Plans are based on an anticipated increase of Refuge visits to one million per year. There are plans to improve accessibility and viewability of the area through such devices as viewing towers, boardwalks which wind out into the Glades, and airboat ride concessions. The Bureau's goal is to provide meaningful recreation experiences for a large number of Refuge visitors without adversely affecting the wilderness character of the Refuge or the tremendous wildlife population which the Refuge holds. The Bureau plans to preserve and enhance the natural scenic qualities of the area, to protect and improve habitat for many species of migratory and native birds and other wildlife, particularly endangered wildlife species, to offer nature oriented recreational opportunities including fishing and hunting, and to offer interpretive facilities and devices for conservation education.

### THE J. W. CORBETT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The 56,000 acre J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area lies in the Sandy Flatlands portion of the county, is irregularly shaped, and is located just south of the Martin County line approximately fifteen miles inland. It abuts the Beeline Highway (SR 710) for a mile or so near the north county line and the single point of public access into the area is from this highway. It embraces a portion of the Hungryland Slough marsh, and contains numerous grass and cypress ponds. It has no natural streams which serve as possible drainage outlets. During the rainy season, approximately eighty percent of the total area is flooded. Surrounding lands are undeveloped except for agriculture and the Pratt-Whitney rocket engine testing facility which is located near the northeast corner.

The Corbett area is owned by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and is primarily a managed public hunting area, with the principal game being deer, quail, wild hogs, and turkey. The Commission has established a basic management program intended to increase the area's production of game birds and animals. A portion of the area is leased for cattle grazing. The Game and Fresh Water Fish Com-

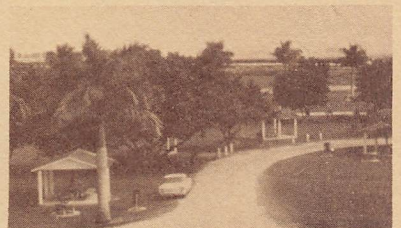
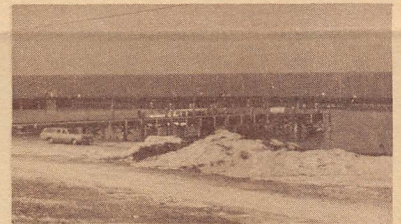
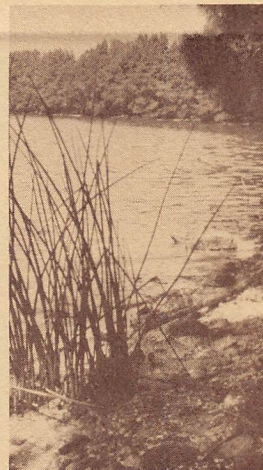


mission has also assumed the responsibility from a private, non-profit organization to complete the development of 1,280 acres of the Corbett Area known as the South Florida Youth Camp. The Commission plans to operate the facility as a recreation camp for South Florida.

### LAKE OKEECHOBEE

One-third or more of Lake Okeechobee's 700 square mile area lies within Palm Beach County. The dike which surrounds the lake rises well above the agricultural lands and small agricultural communities which lie outside it. Although there is no major urban development complex near the lake, the lake and lakeshore serve as an important public recreation and open space resource, providing substantial waterfowl hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, water skiing, camping, hiking, nature study, picnic and related recreation opportunities. In addition to the more fully developed recreation areas, there are several stretches of lake shore where Australian pines rim the lake and picnic tables, barbecue grills, and trash cans have been placed alongside the lake under the trees.

At present, points of access to and recreation facilities and services available at the lake are minimal. There is a tremendous amount of expansion room for public recreation development.



Most of the lake is surrounded with a wide, deep rim canal which will accommodate large boats. The rim canal is interconnected with the main channel through the lake which is a part of the Florida inland waterway system and connects to the east coast at Stuart via the St. Lucie Canal and to the west coast at Fort Myers via the Caloosahatchee River. This coast-to-coast route is designated the Okeechobee Waterway. Recreational boating from the lake up the Kissimmee River and into the many lakes which have a navigable connection with it is also possible.

### PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, GOLF COURSES, COMMERCIAL RECREATION FACILITIES

In addition to the beaches, waterfront recreation facilities, and major open spaces which have already been described, a rich mixture of indoor and outdoor recreation areas, facilities, and programs have been established in Palm Beach County. The municipalities, county government, the Board of Public Instruction, a few land developers, and a great many civic and religious organizations as well as neighborhood associations, clubs, and other special groups are in the recreation land acquisition, development, and/or program operation business. Some of the areas and facilities provided are truly public in that they are available to any resident of or a visitor to Palm Beach County. Others have formal or informal use limitations and serve only those members of the general public who reside within a given area, or within a given age group, or belong to a particular organization, etc.



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